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09/830897
JC18 Rec'd PCT/PTO 02 MAY 2001

WO 00/26323

PCT/GB99/03619

ELECTROLUMINESCENT MATERIALS

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The present invention relates to electroluminescent materials and to devices incorporating them.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Materials which emit light when an electric current is passed through them are well known and used in a wide range of display applications. Liquid crystal devices and devices which are based on inorganic semiconductor systems are widely used, however these suffer from the disadvantages of high energy consumption, high cost of manufacture, low quantum- efficiency and the inability to make flat panel displays, reflectance problems, i.e. low visibility in bright conditions and a narrow viewing angle e.g. $\pm 45^\circ$.

Organic polymers have been proposed as useful in electroluminescent devices, but it is not possible to obtain pure colours, they are expensive to make and have a relatively low efficiency.

Another compound which has been proposed is aluminium quinolate, but this requires dopants to be used to obtain a range of colours and has a relatively low efficiency.

In an article in Chemistry letters pp 657-660, 1990 Kido et al disclosed that a terbium (III) acetyl acetonate complex was green electroluminescent and in an article in Applied Physics letters 65 (17) 24 October 1994 Kido et al disclosed that a europium (III) triphenylene diamine complexes was red electroluminescent but these were unstable in atmospheric conditions and difficult to produce as films.

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The complexes disclosed in these articles had a relatively low photoluminescent efficiency and were only able to produce green or red light and other colours could not be produced.

- 5 We have now discovered photoluminescent and electroluminescent compounds and materials which emit blue and purplish blue light.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- 10 According to the invention there is provided an photoluminescent compound which comprises an organic complex of a transition metal, lanthanide or an actinide and an organic ligand which photoluminescent compound emits light in the blue or purplish blue spectrum.

- 15 It has surprisingly been found that it is possible by choice of the metal and the organic ligand to form a complex which, when an electric current is applied across it will emit blue or purplish blue light.

- 20 The invention also provides an electroluminescent compound which comprises an organic complex of a transition metal, a lanthanide or an actinide and an organic ligand which electroluminescent compound emits light in the blue or purplish blue spectrum when an electric current is passed through it.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

- 25 The colour of light is subjective and colours can be defined by co-ordinates on a two dimensional chart in which colours are areas on the chart and in the present invention the blue and purplish blue spectrum is defined as the area bounded by the co-ordinates in the colour chart CIE 1931 a copy of which is shown in Fig. 1. The complexes of the invention enable light within the co-ordinates (0, 0) (0, 0.3) (0.3, 0) to be produced.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

- 30 Light in the blue region of the spectrum is difficult to produce and hitherto it has not been possible to produce blue light by means of electroluminescence.

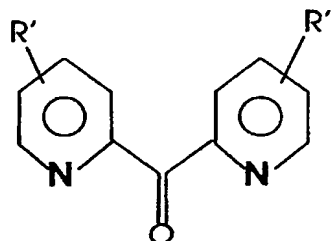
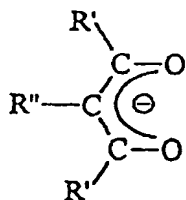
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The preferred metals are thorium (IV), yttrium (III), gadolinium (III), europium (II), terbium(IV), cerium(IV) and cerium (III). A mixture of metals can be used to form mixed chelates.

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The preferred ligands are

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or

15 where R' is the same or different at different parts of the molecule and each R'' and R' is a substituted or unsubstituted aromatic or heterocyclic ring structure or a hydrocarbonyl or a fluorocarbon or R'' is fluorine or hydrogen or R'' is copolymerised with a monomer e.g. or R' is t-butyl and R'' hydrogen.

20 Preferably each of R', R'', and R' is an alkyl group preferably a -C(CH₃)₃ group,

Preferred complexes are TMHD (Tris(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-3,5-heptanedionato), α', α'', α''' tripyridyl, bathophen (4,7-diphenyl-1,10-phenanthroline), crown ethers and cryptans.

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Particularly preferred complexes are the thorium bathophen, yttrium tripyridyl and TMHD, and europium TMHD complexes.

5 A novel complex with strong photoluminescent and electroluminescent properties is Eu(II)(TMHD)_2 complex which is stable in air. It would have been expected that such a Eu(II) complex would have been unstable in the presence of oxygen and it is surprising that this complex is air stable.

10 The complexes of the present invention can be used to form electroluminescent devices.

15 The electroluminescent devices of the invention comprise a transparent substrate which is a conductive glass or plastic material which acts as the anode, preferred substrates are conductive glasses such as indium tin oxide coated glass, but any glass which is conductive or has a conductive layer can be used. Conductive polymers and conductive polymer coated glass or plastics materials can also be used as the substrate. The electroluminescent material can be deposited on the substrate directly by evaporation from a solution of the material in an organic solvent. The solvent which is used will depend on the material for example alcohols such as ethanol.
20 ketones such as acetone and methyl acetylacetonate, and chlorinated hydrocarbons such as dichloromethane are suitable in many cases.

Alternatively the material can be deposited by spin coating or by vacuum deposition from the solid state e.g. by sputtering or any other conventional method can be used.

25 In one embodiment of the invention there is a hole transporting layer deposited on the transparent substrate and the electroluminescent material is deposited on the hole transporting layer. The hole transporting layer serves to transport holes and to block the electrons, thus preventing electrons from moving into the electrode without

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Hole transporting layers are used in polymer electroluminescent devices and any of the known hole transporting materials in film form can be used.

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layer, the electroluminescent material layer and an electron injection layer which is connected to the anode. The anode can be any low work function metal e.g. aluminium, calcium, lithium, silver/magnesium alloys etc.,

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The preparation of compounds of the invention are shown in the examples

Example 1

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Mono(bathophenanthroline)thorium(IV)chloride. Thorium(IV)chloride (5 mmol, 1.87 g) was dissolved in ethanol/water mixture (2:1 v/v) (75 ml) at 50°C. Bathophenanthroline (5 mmol, 1.66 g) was dissolved in a mixture of ethanol/dichloromethane (2:1 v/v) (75 ml) and added portionwise to the solution of the thorium salt. The mixture was reduced on a hotplate at 100°C over one hour. The precipitate was filtered to give an off-white solid which was washed with diethylether (2 x 25 ml) and dried in vacuo to yield the product (1.9 g).

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Example 2

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Mono(α' , α'' , α''' tripyridyl)yttrium(III) chloride. Yttrium(III) chloride (2 mmol, 0.61 g) was dissolved in ethanol (100 ml) and α' , α'' , α''' tripyridyl (2 mmol, 0.47 g) was added. The reaction mixture was warmed for 60 minutes at 50°C and the solvents removed. The residue was washed with diethylether (2x25 ml) and dried in vacuo to give the product (0.80g).

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Example 3

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Tris(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-3,5-heptanedionato)yttrium(III) mono(α' , α'' , α''' tripyridyl). The tris-chelate (1 mmol, 0.64 g) was dissolved in ethanol (100 ml) and α' , α'' , α''' tripyridyl (1 mmol, 0.23g) was added. The reaction mixture was warmed for 60 minutes at 50°C and the solvents removed. The residue was washed with
5 diethylether (2x25 ml) and dried in vacuo to give the product (0.50 g). Yield 57%.

Example 4

Mono(α' , α'' , α''' tripyridyl)gadolinium(III) chloride. Gadolinium(III) chloride
10 (0.37 g, 1 mmol) was dissolved in ethanol (150 ml) and α' , α'' , α''' tripyridyl (0.23 g, 1 mmol) was added. The reaction mixture was heated under reflux for 1 hour and the solvent removed in vacuo to give the gadolinium adduct (Yield 0.50 g).

Example 5

15 Bis(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-3,5-heptanedionato)europium(II). The reaction was carried out under anhydrous conditions using dried glassware under dry nitrogen and using acetyl nitrile freshly distilled over phosphorus pentoxide. Europium(II) chloride (1.0 g, 5 mmol) was placed in a 250 ml three-neck round-bottom flask fitted with a
20 condenser, two dropping funnels and nitrogen bubbler. Deoxygenated solution of the diketone (1.84 gms 10 mmol) in acetyl nitrile (50 ml) was placed in the first dropping funnel and deoxygenated acetyl nitrile (150 ml) was placed in the second dropping funnel. Both funnels were under nitrogen and fitted with nitrogen balloons. Acetyl nitrile was allowed to run into the flask and the mixture stirred at 50°C (oil bath) until
25 dissolution. The diketone solution was then added to the flask and the reaction mixture refluxed for one hour and allowed to cool under nitrogen overnight. The dry diethylether and dried in vacuo at 60°C. (Yield 0.82 g). The filtrate was dried to give pale yellow tris(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-3,5-heptaneionato)europium(II). (Yield 0.90 g).

Electroluminescent devices were fabricated and tested.

I. Device Fabrication

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An ITO coated glass piece ($1 \times 1 \text{ cm}^2$ cut from large sheets purchased from Balzers. Switzerland) had a portion etched out with concentrated hydrochloric acid to remove the ITO and was cleaned and placed on a spin coater (CPS 10 BM, Semitec. Germany) and spun at 2000 rpm for 30 seconds, during which time the solution of the electroluminescent compound was dropped onto it dropwise by a pipette.

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Alternatively the electroluminescent compound was vacuum evaporated onto the ITO coated glass piece by placing the substrate in a vacuum coater and evaporating the electroluminescent compound at 10^{-5} to 10^{-6} torr onto the substrate.

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The organic coating on the portion which had been etched with, the concentrated hydrochloric acid was wiped with a cotton bud.

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The coated electrodes were stored in a vacuum desiccator over calcium sulphate until they were loaded into a vacuum coater (Edwards, 10^{-6} torr) and aluminium top contacts made. The active area of the LED's was 0.08 cm^2 by 0.1 cm^2 the devices were then kept in a vacuum desiccator until the electroluminescence studies were performed.

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The ITO electrode was always connected to the positive terminal. The current vs. voltage studies were carried out on a computer controlled Keithly 2400 source meter.

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Electroluminescence spectra were recorded by means of a computer controlled charge coupled device on Insta Spec photodiode array system model 77II2 (Oriel Co., Surrey, England)

5 2. Photoluminescence Measurements

Photoluminescence was excited using 325nm line of Liconix 4207 NB, He/Cd laser. The laser power incident at the sample (0.3mWcm^{-2}) was measured by a Liconix 55PM laser power meter. The radiance calibration was carried out using Bentham radiance standard (Bentham SRS8, Lamp current 4,000A, calibrated by National Physical laboratories, England. The PL studies were carried out on samples or films. The Complexes of the examples were tested and the results shown in the Table and the Spectra attached as Figs. 2 to 6

15 Table

Example	PL %	$\lambda_{\text{max}}/\text{nm}$	CIE		Colour
			x	y	
1	1.0	450	0.17	0.15	Purple
2	6.0	410,520	0.21	0.32	Greenish Blue
3	0.03	460	0.21	0.29	White
4	16	320,450			Purple
5	0.9	420	0.18	0.05	Purple

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